

# Northwest portion of Love Creek, a tributary of Rehoboth Bay, closed to shellfish harvesting

REHOBOTH BEACH (May 16, 2013) – Effective immediately, the northwest portion of Love Creek, a tributary of Rehoboth Bay, is closed to all commercial and recreational shellfish harvesting. DNREC Secretary Collin O'Mara signed the Secretary's Order after routine water quality sampling of shellfish harvesting areas in and around Love Creek found an increase in the level of an indicator bacteria in these waters. **NOTE:** Shellfish include clams, oysters and mussels; the harvest of crabs is not affected by this closure.

The affected waters are monitored for total coliform, an indicator of potentially harmful bacteria and viruses. Clams, oysters and mussels are filter feeders and can accumulate bacteria, viruses and other pollutants. The risk of illness from contaminated shellfish is much greater than other seafood, because they are frequently eaten raw. However, even cooking does not eliminate the risk of illness from consumption of tainted shellfish.

The shellfish harvesting closure area includes the northwest portion of Love Creek beginning near where Love Creek and Arnell Creek meet to just south of Boathouse Lane. The coordinates for the closure area include: 38° 41' 21.14" N, -75° 8' 2.74" W and 38° 40' 59.85" N, -75° 8' 22.33" W.

The Department is still investigating to determine the precise cause of the deterioration of water quality at Love Creek.

DNREC's Shellfish Program performs shoreline surveys as part

of its public health protection activities. Staff surveys all properties adjacent to shellfish harvesting areas and documents potential sources of contamination. Although a small number of septic systems were identified as potential sources, these systems alone could not possibly contribute enough bacteria to cause the significant increase detected by DNREC.

Based upon clam surveys conducted by Shellfish Program staff, the clam population in the portion of Love Creek now closed is not sufficient to support a commercial or recreational harvest. However, the downstream portions of Love Creek and Rehoboth Bay are very productive clamming areas and will be sampled often and with increased vigilance given the nearby increase in levels of indicator bacteria. DNREC's Watershed Assessment and Management Section Shellfish Program will continue to monitor water quality in the area to protect public health.

The Secretary's Order on the shellfish harvesting area closure at Love Creek can be found [on the DNREC website](#).

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